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HISTORICAL NOTES

THE DWELLING HOUSES OF CHARLESTON, by Alice R. Huger Smith and D. E. Huger Smith, with 11 Illustrations from drawings by Alice R. H. Smith, Photographs, and Architectural Drawings by Albert Simons. J. B. Lippincott Co., Philadelphia and London, 1917; limited edition.

One of those rare books which, once issued, are indispensable. A notable contribution to the artistic, historical and architectural record of Charleston; the most notable of its kind thus far issued in the South. A genuinely distinguished contribution to American domestic historical literature. A volume which will be welcomed by the thoughtful, the appreciative, the cultivated, critical and observant, who have seen with unavailing regret Old Charleston swiftly disappearing before inevitable change, with its quaint, peculiar beauty, curious interest, and distinctive and singularly individual architecture.

A history of the town, its noteworthy dwellings, and the people; a story of the historic dwelling-houses of Charleston, of the people who have inhabited them, and of their architecture, architecture for the most part that of the Georgian period, imported and modified by influence from England, yet persistently maintaining a local character, so peculiar, so adapted to its environment, and so individual as to become a distinctive style, well-developed, excellent, peculiar and attractive, which for many years maintained its supremacy and retained its foothold, altered slightly by the taste which governed the times, yet preserving a distinction now in jeopardy, and marked by a refinement of general taste rarely if ever equaled, and never surpassed, in America.

The task is one seldom essayed by several individuals so well-prepared, so genuinely enthusiastic and so capable of concord. One instinctively recalls old volumes inspired by a true love of their subject, such as those in which Pugin, Heath and Ventouillac employed their skill, flinging their hearts into the task of recording and preserving the beauty, the peculiarity, the history, the technical excellence and singular charm of the architecture of the past. The authors have done the city a service.

The one hundred and twenty-eight illustrations, of singular excellence, comprise fifty-nine drawings by Miss Alice R. H. Smith, including 41 grouped minor sketch-designs of wrought-iron grilles, gates, balconies and brackets, several plates from "Twenty Drawings of the Pringle House," fifteen plans of houses and grounds and measured drawings of architectural detail by Mr. Albert Simons, of Todd, Simons & Todd, thirty-nine photographs by St. Julien Melchers, in addition to reproductions of old maps, water-colors by Charles Fraser, prints and historical photographs. There is a picture, drawing or photograph, of almost every noteworthy old dwelling-house in Charleston, in some instances several, with detail drawings and interior architectural photographs of the most individual and renowned.

The illustrations are printed with unusual care, which the reproductions of Miss Smith's exquisite pencil-drawings, drawings of peculiar, delicate skill and strength, have well repaid. The drawings and plans by Mr. Simons remind one of the delicate elegance and precision of the Style Books of the Eighteenth Century, of which the architecture of Old Charleston was the enchanting echo. One wishes there were more of these. The photographs are excellent.

Mr. Huger Smith's wide fund of authoritative information lends peculiar value to the volume, the text of which represents a vast amount of painstaking research. An immense mass of historical material is here presented with a coherence, a lucidity, an interest and an accuracy uncommon in books of this sort. Perhaps there is no other local historian so well equipped for the task as he. The same unstinting care is lavished upon this book and the same unstinting generosity which characterize all Mr. Huger Smith's relations with students of Charleston's history.

The volume is addressed to Mr. Motte Alston Read, in recognition of sympathy and help always unobtrusively at the service of his friends.

Students of Georgian architecture in its American development, and those who merely enjoy its charm will find much interest in this book.

Further comment, by Mr. Simons, from an academic architectural standpoint, would not have been amiss.

Here and there the text presumes a knowledge which the un-

familiar reader lacks. From this arises, here and there, some uncertainty as to the location of a building under discussion. No space is spent in futile conjecture: the result is a book, timely, welcome and well-done. It is greatly to be regretted that the edition was not larger; the portion in the publisher's hands is already exhausted.¹

In the "Dwelling Houses of Charleston" it is stated that the old house on Meeting Street, now owned by the Charleston Club, was built by Mr. Wilson Glover about 1800. Since the appearance of the book Mr. Huger Smith has been convinced by Mrs. J. Palmer Lockwood, that in fact the house was built considerably earlier by her fore-father, Mr. Josiah Smith. This makes it the more interesting as it thus connects even more closely with the house the name of this prominent Revolutionary figure, to whom is due the reclamation of lower Meeting Street. (See pages 177 and 196 of the book.)

¹ Reviewed by Mr. John Bennett.